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HANDBOOK

GUIDE FOR COMPETITIVE EVALUATION PANELS

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PREFACE

This Handbook is for the guidance of Agency personnel who are appointed by Heads of Career Services to serve on Competitive Evaluation Panels.

The information presented, however, should be of equal interest to all supervisors who will participate in the Competitive Evaluation process and who will, in the final analysis, be largely responsible for its effectiveness.

The guidelines and procedures presented are intended to be advisory in nature rather than regulatory. It is realized that variances in the composition of Career Services and the dispersion, geographically and occupationally, of their personnel will require the development by the Career Services of internal operating procedures to fit their needs. However, the use of this Handbook to set the frame of reference for the operations of Competitive Evaluation Panels of all Career Services will provide a desirable degree of Agency-wide uniformity in promotion administration.

Policy and Procedures on the Competitive Promotion Program are set forth in Regulation [REDACTED] Competitive Promotion.

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GUIDE FOR COMPETITIVE PROMOTION PANELS

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE COMPETITIVE PROMOTION SYSTEM

High esprit de corps of Agency Personnel depends to a considerable degree upon the achievement of a fair and effective promotion system which will earn and retain the respect of all members of the Agency. The Agency has adopted the competitive evaluation promotion policy with the aim of ensuring maximum equity, objectivity and impartiality in promotions. This program is based to some extent upon characteristics of the various promotion systems in the Foreign Service Corps of the Department of State, private business and the Military Services, but is specifically designed to meet Agency objectives of building and maintaining a Career Staff of high caliber. Its chief characteristics are:

A. Performance Measurement:

Appraisal of the employee's value to the Agency in terms of the quantity and quality of the work he has performed and his conduct, skills, personality, potentiality and value to the Agency. A conscientious effort is made to record, via the Biographic Profile and Fitness Report, complete, factual and objective information regarding each individual.

B. Equal Opportunity for Advancement within a Career Service:

Every employee eligible for promotion is rated (a) annually, (b) by an impartial Competitive Evaluation Panel and (c) in comparison with every other member of the same grade and occupational category within a Career Service. This system differs from usual Civil Service practice where promotion depends rigidly upon the grade of job to which the individual is assigned.

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C. Group Judgment:

The relative standing of the person rated depends on group judgment. The Fitness Report contains the opinions of individual supervisors and reviewing officers; the annual competitive rating represents the consensus of a group of experienced senior members of the employee's Career Service with respect to the employee's merit for promotion in comparison with his contemporaries. The objective is to make the promotion system genuinely free from favoritism and bias.

D. Sufficient Service in Grade to Provide a Basis for Evaluation:

The promotion system requires that personnel serve long enough in each grade to provide a basis for a thorough evaluation of their performance at the grade level. This is accomplished by establishing minimum periods of service in each grade during which personnel are not in the zone of consideration for promotion.

E. Recognition of Merit by Advancement:

In each grade, the normal practice will be to promote those who are ranked highest on the list, provided their qualifications can be utilized to advantage at the next grade level. In other words, the available promotions will go to those found by the Panels and Heads of Career Services to be the most competent and valuable to CIA.

II. THE COMPETITIVE PROMOTION PROCESS

A. Function and Composition of Competitive Evaluation Panels:

Panel Competitive Evaluation of all employees eligible for promotion on the basis of their performance, acceptance of Career Staff obligations, qualifications, and value to the Agency is the most critical element of the promotion process. The product of Panel action will consist of a list of employees ranked in order of merit for promotion for the use of the Head of the Career Service in making final

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promotion recommendations. The list will include the employees the Panel considers to merit promotion at the time of Panel action within the numerical limitation which may be prescribed by the Head of the Career Service. Panels will be comprised of a minimum of three members of the Career Service concerned, senior in grade to employees being evaluated, and appointed by the Head of the Career Service to serve for the period of consideration of employees in the grade groups and competitive area(s) assigned. Advanced Panels will evaluate employees in grades GS-12 to GS-14 inclusive and Intermediate Panels will evaluate employees in grades GS-07 through GS-11.

B. Information and Tools used by Panels in Evaluating Employees:

1. Listing of all personnel in the zone of consideration for promotion in the grade level to be evaluated.
2. Listing of personnel recommended for promotion (in order of preference whenever practical) by Senior Supervisors.
3. An indication, if desired, by the Head of the Career Service of the maximum number of personnel to be on the final rank order list based on past promotion experience and status of staffing of the Career Service.
4. Biographic Profiles (Attachment 1) or an equivalent summary of service and performance of each employee in the zone of consideration.
5. Personal interview, whenever feasible, of employees, their supervisors, or others having knowledge of the employees being evaluated. The importance of interviews by the Advanced Panels particularly is stressed.

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C. Significant Factors for Panel Consideration in Evaluating Employees:

1. Performance (productivity, quality, and level of job performed)

- a. One of the chief considerations in competitively evaluating employees is the performance factor - how well has the job been performed - the quality and quantity of work done. In the interest of rendering maximum equity in judging this factor, Panel Members should bear in mind the level of the job performed by employees being evaluated. Otherwise, it may happen, for example, that a high grade employee performing work of a lower level will perform exceptionally well and be rated unduly high, whereas an employee assigned to a position of higher grade may perform with only minimal acceptance and be rated too low. Thus, Fitness Reports and comparable ratings become more meaningful when considered in relation to the characteristics and level of the job performed.
- b. A common criticism of promotion panel systems is that they tend to make employees reluctant to take initiative, but instead employees may be inclined to conform entirely to prevailing opinion. Since this tendency would jeopardize the merit system and the effectiveness of the Agency Staff, every effort must be made to give due credit to employees who have shown themselves capable of sound independent judgment, creative work, self-reliance and the acceptance of unusual responsibility. If the initiative of an employee has led to some difficulty, he should not be severely judged

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because a calculated risk did not work out if the attempted line of action was worthwhile. Similarly, Panel Members should be wary of employees who restrict their output in order to concentrate on a few work products for the purpose of receiving special commendations.

- c. Extra care should be taken to determine the merit for promotion of employees whose duties give them opportunity for comparatively little substantive output which can be readily evaluated, or whose duties and performance cannot, for security reasons, be completely documented. Similarly, employees engaged in training assignments must be given full consideration for their efforts in the light of their reported accomplishments during such training.
- d. In evaluating the performance of employees performing executive or supervisory duties, it is stressed that principal consideration should be given to the demonstration of management skills. Factors in this connection are the demonstrated abilities of an executive or supervisor to plan and organize his unit, establish sound policies, and train and supervise employees and achieve efficient operation and accomplishment of required objectives.

2. Acceptance of Career Staff Obligations

A factor which should be given considerable weight is the willingness of the employee to meet Career Staff obligations. This may be exemplified by acceptance of assignments to isolated or hardship posts, undertaking of specialized training which may

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areas of the world and, in general, by a demonstrated willingness to put the needs of the Agency before personal preference or convenience.

3. Value of Employee to Agency

The problem of developing and keeping the required number of qualified personnel in all lines of work is a problem with which all organizations must contend. The major objectives of the Agency Career Program include exposing Career Staff Members to a broader base of training and experience to increase their versatility and assignment potential as well as the necessity of developing other employees in highly specialized fields. In competitively evaluating employees for promotion, consideration should be given to the present value of the employee to the Agency, and, as best as can be determined, his potential usefulness in the future. Of pertinence to value of an employee to the Agency is a consideration of possession of scarce occupational skills and experience which are difficult to replace and which may have required arduous training or unpleasant assignments for their acquisition.

4. Length of Service

Length of service in a grade level (beyond the minimum time requirement) shall be a factor in the evaluation of an employee's record to the extent that promotion must be earned by meritorious performance over a sufficient period of time. Experience gained prior to entry with CIA should be evaluated on its applicability to an Agency career. Notwithstanding the usual length of service

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requirements, it is important to keep in mind that no employee should be rated lower than his performance merits simply because of the recency of his last promotion. To do so might penalize unusual efforts and talents as well as enhance the chances for promotion of those whose principal claim is that of seniority.

5. Qualifications (Education, Experience, Training, Personal Characteristics)

The degree to which an employee exceeds the minimum standards of experience, training, and education is of pertinence to his evaluation, providing the type of experience, training and education is of demonstrated usefulness in connection with the employee's work and probable future utilization. Personal characteristics should similarly be evaluated in terms of the application to current and probable future assignments.

6. Other Considerations

- a. Care should be taken to ensure that individuals currently on assignments overseas or otherwise outside headquarters are given equal consideration for promotion and are not penalized by their non-availability for interview or the problems of current documentation of performance.
- b. In evaluating employees whose records reflect adverse reports or criticisms, care should be taken to determine whether the adverse material has been out-dated by more recent favorable performance. Giving undue weight to past reports of defects which an employee has corrected may create an unjust permanent handicap to his career. Thus, Panels must be as sensitive to records reflecting improved performance

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- c. Panel Member's personal knowledge of an individual should not be given undue weight. However, if a Panel Member, through personal experience or otherwise, is cognizant of pertinent information not in the record, he shall make that information to the Panel.
- d. In the final analysis, promotion must be earned through demonstration, within the framework of opportunities afforded, of competent performance. Whenever competitive evaluation establishes employee's ratings as essentially equal, it is appropriate that Panel Members give added weight to consideration of age, length of qualifying experience and general background.

D. Suggested Steps in Competitive Ranking by Panels:

- 1. Eligible employees recommended by Senior Supervisors will be accepted by Panels for final ranking for promotion. Their records (Biographic Profile or equivalent) will be given a preliminary review.
- 2. Other eligible employees' records will then be reviewed by the Panel and those considered by the Panel to warrant final ranking for promotion will be included with the names of employees nominated by Senior Supervisors.
- 3. Interviews will be conducted of employees, their supervisors and others having knowledge of their work whenever feasible. This step is particularly desirable for consideration of employees in GS-12 and above.

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4. Each Panel Member will rank all employees (preliminarily selected as above indicated) independently after completion of the review of Biographic Profiles or equivalent summary of service and performance, and the completion of Panel discussions or interviews.
5. Wide discrepancy in Panel Member rankings on any employee will be discussed and more information obtained if necessary. Thereafter, Panel Members may adjust their individual rankings.
6. The final ranking list will be computed as a composite of individual rankings with equal weight being given to each Panel Member's judgment. The individual rankings for each employee will be totalled, and the final ranking will be determined by listing the employee with the lowest total ranking points first, the employee with the second lowest total of ranking points, second, etc.

EXAMPLE

Ranking Order Computation (Employees a, b, c, d, e)

Employee Ranking by Panel Members

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Panel Member 1</u>	<u>Panel Member 2</u>	<u>Panel Member 3</u>
1	a	c	a
2	c	b	b
3	e	a	c
4	b	d	e
5	d	e	d

Determination of Final Rank Order of Employees

<u>Final Ranking</u>	<u>Employees</u>	<u>Total Points</u>
1	a	5
2	c	6
3	b	8
4	e	12
	d	14

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7. If the final list exceeds the maximum number of candidates for promotion desired by the Head of the Career Service, the list will be adjusted accordingly and forwarded to the Head of the Career Service for his use.

III. SUPPORT PROVIDED TO COMPETITIVE EVALUATION PANELS

A. By Office of Personnel:

The Office of Personnel will be responsible for the program of preparing accurate Biographic Profiles of personnel to be evaluated. Due to the volume of work involved, participation by Personnel Officers, Career Management Officers, and employees in this program will be necessary. Additionally, the Office of Personnel will provide clarification on promotion procedures, and furnish listings of personnel in the zone of consideration, qualification requirements for specific positions or lines of work, and position evaluation information.

B. By Career Management Officers of the Career Service:

Important responsibilities of Career Management Officers will be the provision of Secretariat support to Competitive Evaluation Panels, the obtaining of information concerning employees being evaluated before or during Panel considerations, and serving as a point of liaison between the Panel and Senior Supervisors.

C. By Personnel Officers and Administrative Officers in Operating Offices:

Personnel and Administrative Officers will be responsible for ensuring that lists of personnel recommended for promotion by Senior Supervisors are provided to the Panels and will assist Senior Supervisors in this regard. They will participate with Office of Personnel in developing